

VZCZCXR08434
OO RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL
DE RUEHBUL #2292/01 2220553
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 100553Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0729
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 002292

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS USAID FOR ASIA/SCAA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: MURKY SECURITY SITUATION IN KANDAHAR CITY

Classified By: Interagency Provincial Affairs Deputy Coordinator Hoyt Y
ee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (S) Begin Summary. While all parties concerned with security in Kandahar agree that the enemy is stepping up infiltration of Kandahar City (KC) in an apparent attempt to disrupt the elections, there is disagreement as to the actual threat they pose as well as the ability of the ANSF to deal with the threat. Some observers report almost complete enemy freedom of movement (FOM) in KC and warn that the ANSF has lost, or abdicated, control in the city; other observers believe that enemy infiltrators are being killed or arrested in greater numbers than ever through increasingly effective ANP-ANA-NDS joint operations. Much is at stake for the GIRoA and ISAF in KC, and will be necessary to monitor the security situation in the city more closely than ever in order to gain more clarity and respond, if necessary, with ISAF and/or ANSF reinforcements. End Summary.

Kandahar City Getting Too Hot for NGOs

¶12. (S) International and local security personnel employed by NGOs report that at least 100 anti-government elements (AGEs) have moved into KC over the past three weeks. The AGEs reportedly have begun to move freely in the city's bazaars during the evening, carrying small arms and RPGs. The ANP in at least one KC sub-district (District 9) have allegedly entered into a truce with AGEs, and the ANP's ability and willingness to stand and fight in KC is in doubt, as they appear to be avoiding confrontations with the enemy. USAID's main implementing partner (IP) in Kandahar Province is pulling its international staff out of its KC office, citing the growing threat in the city and the possibility that AGEs will soon be able to block the highway (Highway 4, aka Route Aurora) between KC and Kandahar Air Field (KAF), which would leave the internationals with no safe haven should their compounds come under attack.

ANP Challenged, But Holding Its Ground

¶13. (S) Canadian officers at the Kandahar PRT who have responsibility for supporting the ANSF to secure KC have a different perspective on the security situation. The Canadian combined arms company that operates in KC has observed an increase in enemy activity) movements of armed persons at night, primarily) but they dispute the claim that armed AGEs are operating freely in the bazaars. The company commander pointed out that off-duty ANP members in civilian clothes were increasingly carrying weapons for self-defense (as they are allowed to do), and that private security guards also often carry personal weapons when they go to the bazaars. On August 3, there was an incident in sub-district 4 in which residents informed the ANP (which called ISAF for assistance) that approximately 20 armed men were walking through a street in the bazaar. According to Canadian officers who arrived at the scene, the ANP had

converged on the area in force. A combined search of the area by the ANP and ISAF elements failed to turn up any suspicious persons.

¶ 14. (S) The alleged lack of response by the ANP to the build-up of AGE numbers in KC, at least in sub-district 9, might be related to the pull-out of Canadian civilian police (CIVPOL) mentors, who previously stayed with the KC ANP in their sub-stations day and night. The CIVPOL personnel were transferred to FOB Walton, near KC, where they are training new ANP recruits in advance of the elections. (Of the 25 Canadian CIVPOL stationed at the Kandahar PRT, 13 are now working at FOB Walton, seven are on leave, two are at the PRT, and two are attached to USPMT elements working on the outskirts of KC.) According to Canadian military and CIVPOL sources, the sub-district 9 ANP commander, Mullah Gul, is corrupt and unprofessional, and they stated that they found it plausible that he had struck a deal with the AGEs. On the other hand, they cited a sub-district 9 ANP operation on August 2 in which the ANP raided seven mosques in the sub-district at night and interviewed persons they found in them. They also cite numerous other examples of effective ANP policing in KC over the past two weeks, indicating that the ANP are aware of the increased threat and are responding appropriately to it. According to the commanding officer of the Canadian company operating in KC, Kandahar Provincial Chief of Police BG Mirwais and his operations officer are well aware of actual and potential problems in KC, especially in sub-district 9, and are taking steps within their limited resources to shore up security in threatened areas of the city.

KABUL 00002292 002 OF 002

¶ 15. (S) Despite the notional take-over of the lead on security in KC by the ANA in April, the ANA's activity in the city has tapered off as it deploys more of its resources to Arghandab District in order to bolster security in that heavily populated, politically important area. According to Canadian sources, the ANP are in fact handling security in KC almost single-handedly, with critical assistance from the NDS, which consistently delivers accurate, actionable intelligence. The enemy continues to target the ANP in KC; for example, on August 3, an IED was set off at the front door of the ANP provincial finance officer's compound. The attack was the work of one of the two new IED "crews" which the NDS and ISAF have detected in KC over the past two weeks. Both the NDS and ISAF consider it unlikely that the enemy will mount large scale, coordinated attacks in KC. Rather, they will most likely maximize their use of IEDs, including SVBIEDs and SBBIEDs, and continue to target primarily the ANP and GIRoA civilian personnel.

Other Ominous Signs

¶ 16. (S) NGO personnel in KC also report a sharp increase over the past two weeks in the number of "night letters" left at KC mosques. In the letters, AGEs warn people not to vote, not to support the GIRoA, and not to cooperate with ISAF, and not to work for companies contracted by the GIRoA, NGOs, or ISAF. On August 3, AGEs attacked a road crew working on Road 27 north of the Shah-Wali-Kot District Center. In the lengthy clash, 10 heavily-armed private security guards were killed or wounded. A road worker was killed in a rocket attack in the same vicinity on August 5. Canadian officers and intelligence analysts believe the night letters and attacks on road crews, together with continuing attacks on cell phone towers, are parts of a coordinated enemy plan to create the perception among the population that KC is being isolated.

Comment

¶ 17. (S) Although there are multiple indications of a serious

deterioration of security in KC over the past two weeks, the situation is far from clear. There are conflicting indications that the ANSF (primarily the ANP and NDS) are functioning well and are effectively countering the enemy's increased presence in, and pressure on, KC. It is unfortunate, but not surprising, that Development Alternatives International (DAI), USAID's largest implementing partner, is choosing to move its international staffs out of KC at this time, choosing to err on the side of caution for the safety of their staff. Given the importance of KC, it would be a mistake for the GIRoA and ISAF to underestimate the enemy's increasing pressure on KC or to overestimate the ANSF's ability to cope with the threat using present resources. U.S. civilian representatives at the Kandahar PRT will continue to monitor the situation in consultation with Canadian Force elements at the PRT; ISAF and/or ANSF reinforcements might be called for.

EIKENBERRY